THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) and (b) Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) are marketing 5 kg small gas LPG cylinders for domestic purpose in rural and hilly areas, as per the scheme approved by the Government for low income group customers. OMCs have not reported any illegal sale of small gas cylinders.

Further, LPG distributors of OMCs are under strict instructions to supply the cylinders of right quantity and quality to their customers. The Oil Company Officials carry out random checks at distributors' godown, delivery point as well as enroute to ensure that no pilferage takes place. On the establishment of complaint of supply of under-weight cylinders to customers, action against erring distributors is taken in terms of Marketing Discipline Guidelines and/or Distributionship Agreement.

Delay in exploration of oil and gas in North-Eastem Region

1339. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the exploration of oil and natural gas in the North-Eastern Region has recently received a set-back;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken to remove the hurdles in the way of fast exploration of oil in the region?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) to (c) There has been no recent set-back in the exploration of hydrocarbons in North-Eastern Region. Appropriate measures as warranted by the prevalent situation in the region have been taken.

Special dividends by oil companies

1340. SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Govemment have asked the Public Sector Oil companies to declare special dividends of about Rs. 6,000 crore in the current financial year to augment the revenue shortfall;